

First Steps Exit Family Survey

Overall Monthly Survey Results for August 2004-April 2005

Total surveys mailed out: 1767

Total surveys returned: 617

1. How old is your child?						
16 (2.59%)	11 (1.78%)	31 (5.02%)	545 (88.33%)	14 (2.27%)		
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer		
2. When did your child begin receiving First Steps services?						
140 (22.69%)	126 (20.42%)	331 (53.65%)	10 (1.62%)	10 (1.62%)		
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer / did not know		
4. It was easy to learn about First Steps, to find out if my child was eligible for services, and to obtain the early intervention services that were needed for my child and family.						
207 (33.55%)	289 (46.84%)	72 (11.67%)	32 (5.19%)	9 (1.46%)	2 (0.32%)	6 (0.97%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
5. The results of my child's assessments or evaluations were explained to me in ways I understood.						
328 (53.16%)	274 (44.41%)	10 (1.62%)	1 (0.16%)	2 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (0.32%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
6. I feel the service coordinator and early intervention providers listened to me and respected me.						
386 (62.56%)	202 (32.74%)	13 (2.11%)	9 (1.46%)	3 (0.49%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (0.65%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
7. I received information and explanations about our family's legal rights such as due process and procedural safeguards.						
332 (53.81%)	236 (38.25%)	17 (2.76%)	5 (0.81%)	16 (2.59%)	8 (1.30%)	3 (0.49%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
8. In creating our Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP), I was asked about areas where our family felt things were fine and where we felt we needed help.						
379 (61.43%)	222 (35.98%)	5 (0.81%)	2 (0.32%)	5 (0.81%)	2 (0.32%)	2 (0.32%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
9. Our family routinely used the help of our service coordinator.						
163 (26.42%)	268 (43.44%)	125(20.26%)	32 (5.19%)	6 (0.97%)	18 (2.92%)	5 (0.81%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
10. Our service coordinator helped my family, in a timely manner, get the services we needed.						
287 (46.52%)	247 (40.03%)	48 (7.78%)	20 (3.24%)	5 (0.81%)	7 (1.13%)	3 (0.49%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
11. Since being part of First Steps, I know how to work with professionals and advocate for what my child needs.						
259 (41.98%)	272 (44.08%)	34 (5.51%)	10 (1.62%)	13 (2.11%)	22 (3.57%)	7 (1.13%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
12. We received all of the services listed in our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).						
326 (52.84%)	238 (38.57%)	25 (4.05%)	4 (0.65%)	18 (2.92%)	2 (0.32%)	4 (0.65%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
13. The people who worked with my child knew a lot about my child's disability and how to work with him/her.						
345 (55.92%)	218 (35.33%)	35 (5.67%)	8 (1.30%)	4 (0.65%)	3 (0.49%)	4 (0.65%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
14. I received information and explanations about the services my child needed and believe the services my child and the family received were appropriate.						
341 (55.27%)	240 (38.90%)	18 (2.92%)	4 (0.65%)	5 (0.81%)	5 (0.81%)	4 (0.65%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
15. First Steps helped my family and my child's caregivers increase our confidence and competence.						
317 (51.38%)	243 (39.38%)	22 (3.57%)	6 (0.97%)	11 (1.78%)	14 (2.27%)	4 (0.65%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
16. The early intervention services in my family's Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) had a significant impact on my child's development.						
385 (62.40%)	178 (28.85%)	22 (3.57%)	8 (1.30%)	14 (2.27%)	7 (1.13%)	3 (0.49%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

17. The information and help my family received through First Steps made our family better off.

367 (59.48%)	203 (32.90%)	22 (3.57%)	7 (1.13%)	10 (1.62%)	4 (0.65%)	4 (0.65%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

18. The ability of our family to work and play together as a family is pretty normal even though we have a child with special needs.

337 (54.62%)	187 (30.31%)	26 (4.21%)	5 (0.81%)	2 (0.32%)	51 (8.27%)	9 (1.46%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

19. First Steps has enhanced/increased my child's participation in family and community activities.

288 (46.68%)	216 (35.01%)	31 (5.02%)	12 (1.94%)	14 (2.27%)	45 (7.29%)	11 (1.78%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

Questions relating to transitioning out of First Steps

1. My service coordinator informed our family about the transition process and options available for our child.

301 (48.78%)	236 (38.25%)	30 (4.86%)	18 (2.92%)	5 (0.81%)	17 (2.76%)	10 (1.62%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

2. The information provided helped me understand the transition process.

254 (41.17%)	269 (43.60%)	34 (5.51%)	18 (2.92%)	5 (0.81%)	27 (4.38%)	10 (1.62%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

3. A transition meeting was held six months prior to my child's third birthday so a smooth and effective transition occurred at age three.

233 (37.76%)	217 (35.17%)	36 (5.83%)	27 (4.38%)	12 (1.94%)	74 (11.99%)	17 (2.76%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

Questions related to experiences after leaving First Steps.

1. Is your child eligible for early childhood special education (ECSE) services through your local school district under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

442 (71.64%)	102 (16.53%)	58 (9.40%)
Yes (continue on to question #2)	No (skip to question #7)	I do not know (continue to question #2)

2. Is your child receiving ECSE services?

422 (68.40%)	79 (12.80%)
Yes (continue on to question #3)	No (skip to question #7)

3. In creating our child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), I was asked about areas where our family thought things were fine and where my child and family needed help.

230 (37.28%)	196 (31.77%)	12 (1.94%)	7 (1.13%)	5 (0.81%)	17 (2.76%)	150 (24.31%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

4. The special education services our child currently receives are appropriate to meet the child's needs.

247 (40.03%)	145 (23.50%)	33 (5.35%)	12 (1.94%)	9 (1.46%)	22 (3.57%)	149 (24.15%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

5. We are receiving all of the services listed in the IEP.

239 (38.74%)	165 (26.74%)	12 (1.94%)	8 (1.30%)	15 (2.43%)	26 (4.21%)	152 (24.64%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

6. Special education services are helping our family improve our child's development.

280 (45.38%)	143 (23.18%)	7 (1.13%)	6 (0.97%)	6 (0.97%)	24 (3.89%)	151(24.47%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

7. Our family is accessing other community services and resources such as Parents as Teachers, Head Start or child care to support our family and our child.

199 (32.25%)	213 (34.52%)	47 (7.62%)	11 (1.78%)	7 (1.13%)	118 (19.12%)	21 (3.40%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

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Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children, families and providers have been redacted.

Very happy. Wish more resources for families that make more money but not enough to self pay. No real resources for average to low income levels.

#3 on page 3: This was attempted, but the school district did not comply.

First Steps is a wonderful program. My son is not age appropriate, yet is not two standard deviations away from the norm (1.75). It is sad when we have worked so hard to make the strides we have and now the school system needs a number rather than the goal of helping him become age appropriate. So now we sit and wait for regression and we will try to get help when he is four.

We really appreciated having our therapist come and work with our son. He still ask about her sometimes. Thanks for everything.

We received Speech Therapy. Our child is not, however, disabled.

I want tot say thank you to our service provider. She helped us out a lot.

First Steps has helped my daughter enjoy life to her fullest potential. Without this service, I do not know where we would be! Thank you to all involved.

I found my First Steps service coordinator to be very friendly. She scheduled appointments and attended to our needs. However, I don't think First Steps benefited my particular child. She experienced seizures at birth but fortunately hasn't had any episodes since. Also, I am a school counselor with a graduate degree. I've trained to help students with needs such as my daughter. Additionally, I have three Parents As Teachers in my family and an ECSE teacher in my family. So, my daughter is one of the lucky children who is surrounded by people who can help her in a variety of ways. Thanks for your help!

Keep it going!!!

We are very appreciative and thankful for the financial support we received through First Steps as our daughter participated in physical therapy.

Just now assessing Question #7 under Experiences after leaving First Steps.

The worker responsible for seeing my son came only once. When I tried to end the First Steps Program, I continued to receive the "bills" as if he were still enrolled. I asked numerous times for them to take my son out of the program. They're claiming that my son was still in the program for funding purposes was both shady and wrong.

Thanks to First Steps. We would have missed a lot without it!
Thanks again!

The initial intake coordinator and the services providers were exceptional and caring. The services coordinator was really not needed by our family. Other than the initial meeting to establish the plan and sign numerous files, her only involvement was quarterly phone calls to see if we were okay.

We are starting with the school district in January. Too early to rank the program. However, I don't know what we would have done without First Steps. My child has come a long way with therapies provided by First Steps. Thanks aren't enough.

My child's speech therapist did a great job. The transition out of First Steps to school was very, very, very bad. My son qualified for one and half hours of help each week at First Steps and right off the bat the school just wanted to give him one half hour each week. In fact, I have a lot more to say on this subject and would be happy to talk to anyone about what should be done or changed.

At the time of the transition meeting, I thought my child would no longer need services after age three. At age three, when it became apparent she would need those services, I was not able to get them. I was told to call and leave messages with various people and now my child no longer receives therapy, even though she needs it.

Very wasteful. Too many watchdogs.

The only difficulty we experienced was with the billing of services through Boone Hospital and First Steps. There seemed to be a communication problem between the two. It took a while to sort it out. Otherwise, I am an extreme advocate of this service and would be willing to defend it's necessity and survival to anyone. Our regional coordinator was always available and exceptionally knowledgeable and supportive.

Everyone was great! Thank you for everything.

Our child was a foster child and no longer lives with us but the speech therapy he received from First Steps has helped him tremendously.

It's a wonderful program that really helped my son catch up on his development.

My child was seen at Children's Mercy at birth, (craniofacial clinic and developmental pediatrician) however, never once did anyone there communicate the First Steps program to me. I eventually learned of the program when my child was six months old and I was still seeking help for my child's issues and I contacted KU Medical Center/Autism Center. They directed me to First Steps and I will be forever grateful to KU Med.

I only wish you went to kindergarten age. The transition to preschool was rough.

The First Steps Program was a good program. My son enjoyed it.

The First Steps program was wonderful and now that we are involved in the ECSE, I realize how much more "user friendly" First Steps was. I loved that the services from First Steps were in our home. Our speech therapist with D.C.O. was excellent! The process of transitioning to ECSE-specifically the testing- was difficult and did not seem to be focused on making it comfortable for my child. Those doing it were obviously overworked and stressed. Our experience with First Steps was much more positive than our current situation with ECSE.

One problem we faced with First Steps was during the transition period. There was a huge misunderstanding between us and our service coordinator about sending our son to a catholic school and still being able to receive services. We both misunderstood each other. A friend of mine, a speech therapist in another district, explained the options to me. At that time my son was already three years old and First Steps services had stopped. I did contact our service coordinator and explained the problem. She apologized and was wonderful in getting us quickly transitioned into the Mehlville special school district. We are thrilled with the services we are receiving now. The only other issue we had was with our speech therapist. She was nice and worked well with our son but it seemed she was always calling and canceling. I realize these services were free, but I felt we missed a lot of valuable therapy time.

I have a child with autism and the SLP and OT were not making any progress until we started ABA. All SLP and OT's should be trained in ABA in order to help children with autism. It is ridiculous how long it takes for a provider to be paid through First Steps. I've seen it take as long as eight months to be reimbursed for services provided.

We didn't get to work with First Steps very long before our son turned three, but the few months we did, I felt very grateful. They were a great team of girls and they worked on getting us involved with Speech and OT and all the evaluations, which helped get our son into the community school for the help he needs. Thanks so much.

He also has Occupational Therapy-at risk. He is not receiving Physical Therapy anymore but I hope that he can get it in the future. Thank you

It is my opinion, that the strict April 1st deadline, or magical date, needs to be revisited and decided on an individual basis depending on many issues. These issues being how well the child is progressing with the First Steps therapist; how much he/she will be seen by a therapist in the school district and; input from the child's parents. My son, with a moderate speech delay, was making great gains with the First Steps therapist. However, just when therapy was going well, we had to switch to the school districts therapist because his birthday was March 27th - not April 2nd. No matter how much extra help he received at home, his progress stalled and even regressed. As a kindergarten teacher, I consider myself well-educated and "in the loop" with little ones, however, I am not a speech pathologist, and we missed ours when we had to stop. Please think about hearing appeals from parents on an individual basis when it is close to the April 1st date!

The First Steps program was the greatest gift to our family. We had been struggling so much, yet did not realize the magnitude of our son's delays and disabilities and how these were impeding his development. My only complaint with First Steps was that it took four months for us to get through the intake process to begin receiving services. I do not want the Governor to take away or change this program at the expense of these children who so desperately need help. I will gladly accept a tax increase if it means giving these children the support they need. First Steps has been a life saver!

I am currently a special education teacher and that is the way we found out about First Steps. I am the one who had to call and initiate the transition to the school district at age three.

Please keep the program.

I wasn't for sure my child would walk but with the confidence of the physical therapist, she assured me she would walk like a normal child. We had a lot of catching up to do since my child was in casts for eighteen months due to club feet and several surgeries.

She also loved aqua therapy. She didn't realize she was getting "a workout"; she was just having fun. First Steps had great ideas to help us improve her walking. When at physical aqua therapy, she would say it was her playtime. The therapist came to play every week at our house. I still keep in touch with the therapist. Thank you so much. My child has beautiful feet and runs faster then lightening. She's making up for lost time.

I loved our coordinator and all the therapists.

The therapists we had in the First Steps program were wonderful. Our child seemed to have lost a lot of his momentum after he turned three and was no longer in that program. I feel that the program should be extended to age four. The children that it helps are behind so therefore need a longer period of this specialized help. It was a big blow when the Jefferson Co. Developmental Services school closed because of funding cuts. But the daycare at Jefferson College qualified for your program and they were great. But after he turned three they dropped him. I wanted him to stay there but they didn't even ask and then they were full.

It was not until the end of our time with First Steps that we were told exactly what our situation with our daughter was. Despite the recommendations of our pediatrician, opthomologists, Childrens Center for the Visually Impaired, I feel that First Steps and our school district failed us and turned us away. This after telling me they had a visual specialist. This person never spoke to me or saw my daughter. However, First Steps could do nothing to help me because she had already turned three. I feel like the system failed my daughter.

The services provided by the First Steps Program were quite effective for our daughter. My only concern involves my daughter's initial evaluation for First Steps at nine months of age. She was denied. At the time she was at least 25% delayed. She was evaluated again at 18 months and found to be 25% delayed in some areas and close to 50% delayed in other areas. She was accepted at this juncture but was only able to take advantage of the program for six months. Considering how useful the program would be I was very disappointed that our child was not able to take advantage of 27 months worth of services. The quality of the services provided and the people my wife and I worked with who were able to assist our daughter in closing the gap in her development delays were outstanding. They were truly wonderful people to work with. The state of Missouri failed our family specifically my daughter in turning her down for services when she was originally evaluated in November 2001.

Could you help me find help for my son? He still needs speech therapy. I wish I could get someone to help him. He speaks better in some words, but others you have to guess what he is saying. Plus, he started stuttering really bad. This program helped me a lot. Thank you.

Our experience was hindered due to changing coordinators often. Up until it was time to transition out of First Steps, most experiences were positive. Sometimes we weren't sure who we were dealing with or if they even was someone. The one thing that has made most of my answers negative was not being transitioned into an ECSE program. I have had to use several other services to help us with much tension and red tape so to speak. My son should have begun preschool in August or September but by late October, we are still awaiting evaluations. I have had to use Head Start and their advocates, and advocate from Jefferson City, local Parents As Teachers and a psychologist-all with many hours of phone calls and information requests. I hope our case is an isolated one as I do believe the program is a benefit when done right.

Thank you!

I appreciated having a service coordinator who was very familiar with our child's disability. She was able to make helpful suggestions/recommendations.

Thank You! Very much!

For my son First Steps has been an excellent program. For my daughter however, she fell through the cracks of the system but is now receiving services through the School District.

Question #1: I didn't know about it until our Parent As Teacher Educator told us about the program.

It is an excellent program. I do think it is difficult to expect the parents to be able to choose the appropriate therapist (in one case, a speech therapist), when we know little about these things. It was kind of like throwing a dart at a dartboard. Other than that, it was an excellent program for us.

Our First Steps speech therapist while we lived in Hickory County did nothing to improve her speech.

First Steps was incredible. I don't know where my daughter's development would be now if it wasn't for First Steps. My Coordinator was the best. She was very helpful, answered all my questions, and tried to help us in anyway that she could. With First Steps' help I am confident that my daughter will be on task for kindergarten. Please save First Steps for other children!!

Parents As Teachers was worthless in assisting my children and family. In fact, I found out about First Steps through my son's orthopedic surgeon. I had been involved in PAT for a year by then and all they could say is "yes, he's somewhat delayed".

The only set back we encountered was finding a physical therapist in our area. There just don't seem to be enough to go around. But, overall, the program was wonderful. We did finally get one and my son is doing great. All of the therapists he had were so good with him and I know that since we started him so young he now has a better chance at as normal a life as possible. The therapists were great about showing me how to do specific things with my child to increase his development. I believe it is important that all people involved in a special needs child's life should be on the same page. It is important for parents to help do their part and for the therapist to encourage and show the parents things to do to help their child. I believe First Steps is a vital part of development for special needs children. Parents are not educated on how to raise and care for these special children. Through First Steps, parents can be educated by the therapist to provide the best chance for their child. I hope First Steps stays around for other children. I feel I was very lucky to have had the experience with First Steps. The therapists taught me a lot and together we would come up with a plan to increase my child's developmental skills. My son has Downs Syndrome and is very high functioning and I thank God that he was given First Steps to help him. Without First Steps and other early intervention programs children will not have the chances they need to reach their potential. I just want to say again, thank you First Steps for all you have done for my child and my family.

In the beginning we had trouble getting First Steps started - lots of miscommunication. A lot of unreturned phone calls. After services started and we began working with our therapist things were better. We just don't feel that our child's condition improved with services from First Steps. He has improved tremendously since attending the school for therapy. If we were referred to First Steps again, we would probably not choose to use them. Thanks for your time.

I believe we would have benefited if we had been referred earlier to the program.

First Steps not only financially helped us but helped us to receive all the services our child needed and we are very thankful.

The service coordinator should be better trained to evaluate services needed. Perhaps service providers themselves should also perform service coordination tasks.

A good program concept, but there is room for improvement and changes that would benefit families and save the state money.

I was extremely happy with all of the services provided. Most especially the therapists. If it weren't for this program, our daughter would not be at the level she is now. She is still developmentally delayed, but the strides she made were fabulous. This program helped our family learn to work with and better understand a special needs child. Thank you so much.

We found the program to be very helpful and beneficial to our child. Jan Jones was always available for questions and made the process very easy. We felt guilty at first because the program was free, but we were very glad it was available. As a first time parent, it was a great resource to turn too. Thank you for providing this service.

Our lives would have been much different without the help and direction of First Steps. This is a wonderful service for children who might not otherwise get the developmental needs they must have in order to thrive and eventually become independent. Thanks to our wonderful providers we were also able to identify other developmental delays too. The faster we can "close the gap" and transition our daughter to a typically developing classroom of kids the better. Once in First Steps my concerns were finally validated and I was able to learn how to help my child effectively. Our therapists were outstanding. They are very professional and I will forever be thankful to them and the First Steps program. We must keep this program for the future of our children! The kids and families you help truly need the help more than anyone. Thank you.

First Steps and the professionals I met through the program made an INCREDIBLE improvement to our family's life! Great Program.

Although we have health insurance, if it were not for First Steps and the therapy through the school district, we would be financially stressed and I do not believe my son would have made the exceptional progress that he has.

My son was diagnosed with Dysphagia (swallowing disorder) and dyspraxia of speech. Before First Steps he could not talk and communicate with us. We felt very fortunate to have the help and therapy we received.

Need to reimburse providers quicker.

My son no longer receives services from First Steps, but when he was, I was very happy with the services and the people we worked with. Thank you.

First Steps was a great program for our son. We saw progress and were quickly able to communicate better. The First Steps Coordinator communicated with us all the time regarding testing, services available, and next steps to take in his development. It was important to us as parents to set attainable goals for our son and First Steps did that. It was encouraging to see all of the goals achieved.

Before First Steps we could not communicate with our son and after receiving the speech therapy he needed he has already made a huge improvement! We cannot be thankful enough for the availability of this program. Without it I do not know where our son would be in his developmental delay!

We had a great transition moving from Illinois to First Steps in Missouri. We are very grateful for the great assistance that was given. Thank you very much. It was money well spent.

Need to reimburse the providers quicker.

Our service coordinator was excellent, very pleasant to meet with. I loved all of our child's therapists, the physical therapist usually ran late, sometimes didn't show up, but when she was here I couldn't ask to have anyone that loved our child more than she did. Our special instruction person was so informative and excellent for my child & me both! I really miss all of them and our child still remembers them!! Thanks so much

First Steps helped our child with his disability and to transition to Special Education smoothly. I'm not sure that we would have found out how to get into Special Education without First Steps.

I really hope First Steps will continue to help families that have children with disabilities. First Steps has helped my oldest who is eight years old now and my youngest who is three years old. Her speech wouldn't have improved without first steps and our local school district.

Regarding Page 2, Question 12: Not the fault of First Steps, but rather one of the service providers who was seldom available and did not return phone calls. The other service providers (from the same company) were ALWAYS available.

At first I was not pleased with First Steps because it seemed that as soon as I got to know the service coordinator they would quit or change responsibilities. I was very pleased after we got connected with another service coordinator. She was always available and easy to contact.

The program should be expanded to include ages through Kindergarten. First Steps is a much better program than available through the school district. Without First Steps, my child would not have developed to the point he is now. We were very pleased and grateful for all the help received from First Steps. THANK YOU!!!!

Our daughter was born at 26 weeks and needed OT and DT therapy. I believe without First Steps she would not be as attentive and thriving in pre-school.

We have not received any services through First Steps since our daughter's first year. We filled out one of these surveys after we were discharged. This survey is not applicable for us this year.

I would like if he was able to be tested. He is doing really well right now. I want to thank everyone who had helped me and my son with all of his needs.

First Steps provided Speech Therapy for my son. My insurance would not have covered this and I would not have been able to afford it. Luke went from two words at 18 months to being advanced now for his age in his sounds and words. In fact, he has a huge vocabulary that amazes us everyday. Myself and others are now able to understand him. I cannot imagine where he would be developmentally without First Steps. I hope and pray that Governor Blunt does not eliminate funding for First Steps. I would be happy to share my son's success with him if he needs a better understanding of the program.

My son needed much more speech with his speech therapist. Due to his small number of minutes in his IFSP, the ECSE group who developed his IEP gave us few speech minutes within the classroom. There is a direct correlation between what they were given and what will be done in the future, even if it was inadequate in amount. That is frustrating. I also believe that our "SPOE" was so swamped with paperwork that our desires or needs went unanswered for quite some time. The first priority of a service coordinator should be the families they serve, not the piles of paperwork that are (for the most part) unnecessary. Case in point - there is so much paperwork being sent out that our own family doctor who has been signing all the documents is truly tired of signing multiple documents that are trivial. If the governor is looking at saving money in the First Steps program, I suggest he cut out the need for three quarters of the paperwork, therefore making the service coordinator's time better spent and cutting hours of meaningless paper pushing.

Our daughter has made, and continues to make, incredible progress. Without the early intervention and help from First Steps, our daughter wouldn't be where she is today. We cannot say enough about the wonderful experience we have had with the First Steps program.

We got in really late knowing nothing about the program. I found out about it by accident. Before then I had never heard of it. My child was only in it two or three months before his third birthday and we had a lot of problems. The main one being the specialist never showed up.

If it wasn't for First Steps, I am not sure if I would have known now to help my daughter and get her in the school program. It is absolutely wonderful.

Question 7: Ended at Age 3 (Parents As Teachers)

Governor Blunt did not know what he was doing. I hope future changes are not made so hastily. Children should be entitled to all the help they can get whether their parents can afford it or not. They are the future we will be depending on and we need to help them be strong. First Steps helped me step back, take a breath, and think "WOW, we can really get through this and everything will be alright."

First Steps is a wonderful program that lets the parents work with providers and be a large part of the decisions that are made to best suit the needs of their children. Special Education is awful. The parents thoughts and wishes for their child are heard but not acted upon. The IEP team treats you whichever way they want and do not take the child's best interest in hand. They provide only what they have to provide not what they should provide. I have only liked my first year in Special Education because of the Senate Bill that allowed my child to stay with a Part C provider. I fear next year that my child will show regression from being changed into a new unfamiliar environment when he should stay where he is at. But, the decision will not be mine as his mother, that's really unfair to him.

First Steps is a wonderful organization. They helped with three of my grandchildren and did a fantastic job. They all got over their problems and are doing everything right for their age or better.

I brought my son's problem to my pediatrician and to Parents As Teachers. PAT gave me a number to contact the people from First Steps. It took almost three months to respond to my repeated calls. They had trouble finding an available therapist to do the evaluation. After the evaluation, they had thirty days to find a therapist to start services. They couldn't find a speech therapist to come to my area, instead my son got referred to a developmental therapist. By the time we got the ball rolling with First Steps, it was time for a transition meeting with ECSE. However, if it hadn't been for the three months of therapy my son received, I wouldn't have felt comfortable sending him to ECSE preschool. My son is now making wonderful progress and meeting IEP goals.

Question 4: This was not the coordinator's fault. The process is just very long and tedious. That being said, it was well worth the effort as our son's speech has improved significantly.

Question 3: Addressing transition

Our son was only part of First Steps for a short period of time so the six months doesn't apply.

Comments:

Margaret Pickens was our Service Coordinator at First Steps. She did a wonderful job for our family. She was thorough and extremely easy to work with. We were blessed to have her working with us. Our son's speech pathologist was Kristin Weber of O'Fallon, Mo. I cannot imagine being any happier with anyone else. She is a wonderfully gifted, kind-hearted lady who truly bonded with our son. With her help he has made incredible progress and is able to express himself more effectively. Thanks for the work you do! Sincerely, Amy Cordes

We were greatly saddened to hear that the First Steps program is in jeopardy of being shut down. I can't express enough how the program has helped our son to achieve "normalcy" in his life. We will definitely be outspoken advocates to keep this program up and running.

I hope the things on line seven all get cut! It ALL is a waste of my tax money!!!

Please continue the First Steps Program! Our son's teachers were knowledgeable, caring, supportive and an awesome beginning to our little boy's development. We highly recommend the program. We would have felt very lost without all the help. It makes us very concerned and upset that the program could be taken away from children and the families.

I think First Steps is a fabulous program. I see many, many children in my son's preschool that have greatly benefited from First Steps. My only complaint was and is that our Speech Therapist and OT were frequently late and canceled often and the time was not made up. I know that the Program was not changed for their time but I felt that my son qualified for a certain number of hours a week and he was not always getting the time. I know that we could have changed therapists but our window with First Steps was very small so I did not want to lose any additional time. I hope that someone will be able to monitor the therapists a little more closely because I don't think the state or the children are getting their moneys worth when it comes to certain therapists. However, I signed the SAVE FIRST STEPS petition and hope the program continues.

All of the providers were just wonderful. We (including our child) were very sad to have the services terminate when she turned three.

I just want to say that our service coordinator and a friend has been a great help. She really shows wonderful compassion and goes to extremes to make sure our daughter is getting the care she needs. I really appreciate her so much.

First Steps was great for my daughter. ECSE was a big joke and that's why we pulled her out! Nobody there cared about helping my daughter. I wish I could go back to the at-home therapy First Steps provides. That worked wonders on her! One of my daughter's areas of delay is social...being away from Mom is her biggest fear. ECSE just expected her to "be normal and get over it", when they know "normal" is what she is lacking. It was just a huge slap in the face. So, now my daughter is stuck with these delays and no one to help her!! It's really sad and not fair to her!

First Steps program has helped us a lot. Thank You!!!

I just know they were great and don't know what things would be like if he didn't get any help.

I am an educator myself, and have found this program to be an excellent early intervention program. I was at a loss at what to do for my child. First Steps guided me and carefully explained the issues and possible solutions. The only suggestion I would make is letting more parents know about this program. I know the benefit of EC education but there are many families who do not know about it and its benefits.

Most questions would be answered differently for our first service coordinator.

While my child was in First Steps, our first case manager did not want our child to get services that he needed stating it was too early. That was resolved when the case manager was changed to Staci Goodwin. Now that my child is in the school system at my initial IEP, I, as a parent, was made to feel that I was asking too much. It is very hard to hear from other parents that if I was in a different area I would not have a problem obtaining the services that my child needs. All school systems should be the same. My child is in the Francis Howell system and at six months in I am calling for another IEP to try and obtain the services my child needs. We have already been through one teacher who apparently did not care about teaching special needs children. His consistency in therapists has not happened which calls my attention to the question of the consistency in what is being worked on. It should not be so hard to obtain services for a special needs child. I would be willing to talk openly.

Only wish pediatricians were more aware of First Steps wonderful services. Another parent informed us.

I would like to have seen the school do more assessments on my child when transitioning. For example, I believe my child is in need of occupational therapy but the school will not do an assessment. I was very pleased with the services my child received through first steps.

The bureaucratic paperwork seems unnecessary and time consuming and resource consuming. The service coordinator position is a middle man position not necessary to the process of getting these kids their services. As is the parent/program liaison.... who only called to verify a meeting time when the re-evaluation time came around. I just think your money is better spent on maintaining services and quality teachers than on sending people around to summarize what the parents and teachers and therapists have agreed upon. For example the monthly "statements" the therapists "billed time" on it.... Comparable to an EOB. What a waste of valuable dollars.

Our speech therapist was absolutely wonderful. She made a world of difference in my son and how we spoke with him. Thank you!

It took numerous phone calls to get things started. I finally left a message saying it would be the last time I called. I finally got a call back. I had been warned it would be hard to get through. The speech therapist was wonderful with my son. She helped him a lot in the short time she worked with him. My only regret is I wish I had known about this program sooner so he could have received the one-on-one sessions more than three and a half months.

The early intervention through First steps brought my son's speech capabilities up to speed. Through First Steps we were able to address his speech delay before it began to adversely affect many other areas of his development. Our therapist was wonderful and all of the First Steps contacts were very professional, clear and efficient. I am a large supporter of First Steps and strongly encourage the relevant politicians and administrators to keep the program up, running and as expansive as possible. I firmly believe that money expended for services at this young age certainly saves greater amounts of money in the future.

Our coordinator was severely out of touch with my son's progress. At our initial meeting with the Early Childhood Development staff at our local school district, she had no clue about what he and his speech therapist had been working on. She didn't know that we had decided to work on another area that he needed more help with. Speech therapist was excellent. Coordinator was horribly uninvolved. Very happy with speech therapists, very unhappy with our coordinator.

Our service coordinator was fabulous!

Our child excelled in his speech development since starting First Steps. We were very happy with the speech therapist. It is a wonderful service.

We moved from Dent County to St. Louis to help our son with more learning resources. First Steps did NOT transfer me. I had to call and call and reapply. Big Hassle. When services FINALLY started in Aug (?) - they only lasted to mid-December - although his birthday is January, 2001. Therapists were always calling off appointments. Eventually, I was told in December they weren't coming since his birthday was close and that they needed to work on replacing him with another child. The reason I disagree with many of the questions, is because I don't feel as if they even wanted to help my son. I only met and talked to his coordinator once; then never again. His therapists came late and left early to go to other appointments. After December's first week they randomly picked and chose days they would do therapy. I can count the number of times on ONE hand they came in January although his birthday isn't until the 31st. The biggest reason I wouldn't recommend this program is because I transferred him into school ALONE. I was told they would help me get him into school but I finally picked up the phone and did it myself months AFTER his birthday. He is in school (two weeks now) and doing better in these two weeks than those few months. His teachers are great and therapy lasts an ENTIRE session not just 20-30 minutes. I'm over it now. But I still wouldn't recommend it. Thank you for your time.

#13: One of the people who worked with my child was fantastic. The other was not very helpful because she was always ready to leave before she got started.

Pg. 3, #1: I didn't even realize we were not going to need services anymore until we were told by the speech therapist.

Comments: Thank you very much for all of the speech services. The speech therapist is fabulous and we would not have been as successful without her. We miss her.

I am just thrilled to see my daughter's progress with her speech. The First Steps program is certainly a blessing for speech delayed kids.

First Steps is a great program. We are so thankful First Steps was available to us.

The program is excellent for kids that have learning issues. My kids had speech issues and are now speaking so well that I am so thrilled. Thanks and this certainly would not have been possible without First Steps.

We have had a fantastic experience through First Steps and would highly recommend it to those in need of services.

Question 6: Some were good and some were bad. I had several service coordinators. They kept switching me to new people due to people quitting, etc.

Question 10: Some were horrible! I waited a long time to get new services needed!

Question 13: Some good, some clueless.

First Steps is a great program but you need to get the word out. Had I known about it earlier my child would have benefited more. (My Parents As Teachers person should have told me about it sooner). I learned of First Steps from my neighbor who has a child with Downs. I thank her for telling me about the program. The communication with First Steps was good. That communication DECLINED when my child started the ECSE system.

Great program for both children. But the school district was to slow in transition and didn't get enough services for her or our son.

We are grateful for the services provided thru First Steps and feel they were beneficial. The paperwork seemed excessive at times, particularly all the things that were sent by mail. I know a lot of it was disclosures required by law, but it seemed like too much. Everyone we dealt with was professional and very helpful.

Overall, we were very happy and appreciative with our experience with First Steps. Our son has developed leaps and bounds!

The only complaint I have about the First Steps program is that we had a hard time finding someone to come out to our house and work with my child. We live in a rural area and went through three people before someone would accept responsibility to come on a continuous basis. Once we had found someone she was great! Her name is Amy Heinaman, KC area. I was worried at first after the coordinator came to our house that we would not be able to find a teacher. I had some teachers that made appointments and canceled at the last minute. After finding a teacher I had a great experience with the program.

Getting into First Steps took awhile due to case overload and not enough coordinators. We had multiple problems with Physical Therapy due to unreliability, and therapists quitting the company. I got fed up and searched for another therapist in another company. The service coordinator was not thorough in his explanation of services beyond First Steps after my son turned three and did not mention other available resources, i.e. reprieve care, which I learned about from a social worker that I happened to meet. I felt that some of the therapists treated their sessions with my son like "hurry up and let's get this done so I can move on to the next kid" rather than taking the time to really work with him. I think, over all, the experience was beneficial as I learned from the therapists and incorporated much of their functions into my daily routines to help my son develop better. I think the program was more of a teaching tool for me than a learning tool for him. Also, KUDOS to Dr. Norman Steele for informing us about Parents as Teachers and First Steps!

I had a wonderful experience with First Steps. We just suffered a little disappointment once we reached our school districts services. I wish they were as good! Thank you

Switching service coordinators as often as we got switched, really confused us. We got good service but the timely manner was slowed due to the switching.

I want to thank all of the therapists that helped our child.

Because we had a very good case manager who was very familiar with our child's condition, we had great support. We had great difficulty finding providers who would come to our home even before the more recent budget problems. For a child with a suppressed immune system and on a vent, this was crucial. My complaint about the school program has to do with their guidelines for services. For a child who neither walks nor talks (but is making progress toward both) they were not wanting to give much in the way of therapy - one hour per week speech and 30 minutes a week PT - on that he would not have made it to where he is now.

We were familiar with First Steps with our first child. We really appreciate all the help and information available through this program. I didn't know if we would be where we are at in assisting our son to develop appropriately without First Steps. We are a little apprehensive about the transition, but since he's not even two yet, we will get to it when it comes. Thanks!

First Steps provided the necessary eyeglasses our child required which greatly assisted our family financially. The speech pathologist, that worked with our child is certainly an asset to your program. He was very caring, organized and knowledgeable. My son bonded immediately with him.

We would like to thank the First Steps program for all the help they gave to our child and family. We had never heard of the program, but once a need was recognized by our PAT person and we were referred to First Steps things really changed. We are so blessed for the early intervention this program provided for our child. Our caseworkers were GREAT! They helped our son and our family so much. With their help we closed all the gaps in areas of delayed development and other issues that were prevalent in our child. We now have a child that qualifies for NO services and no one would ever suspect any previous delays. I cannot imagine where we would be without the help we have received. Thank You!

The speech therapist was extremely loved by my son at the end of their year together. He really "took" to her, making learning better!

Great program for both children. But the school district was to slow in transition and didn't get enough services for her or our son.

Participating in the Missouri First Steps program was a good experience for us as well as our child. I believe she really progressed with the help of her therapists and Parents as Teachers.

We loved our First Steps providers. They were knowledgeable and so helpful and related great with our family.

Parents As Teachers referred me to First Steps. My coordinator with Rolla Regional was great! Our therapists were awesome! The transition to ECSE were smooth. Our Special Ed teachers and therapists are superb! First Steps is a great program!

My biggest complaint had to do with the lack of urgency I experienced with First Steps after I sent in our paperwork. We received the name of our first contact person and were told she would contact us within two weeks. We never heard from her and I left multiple messages! I started the paperwork in February yet we did not get services until late June. Our son missed out on four months of services because of her incompetence. Once we had our first meeting, things finally moved. Our therapists and service coordinator were great. It was the first person we had to work with who was not helpful. She kept complaining about being understaffed and it took her a month or more to return our initial call. I work at a university with physical therapy and occupational therapy professors. Thankfully, they helped me work the system.

My only complaint is that my child could not receive all of her services in the home because of lack of therapists who would be willing to travel to give my child therapy. My understanding is that therapists are no longer paid mileage yet under First Steps, I, the parent, can get mileage reimbursement for taking my child to a therapist?? It is frustrating and would have made my life a lot easier as well as my child's had she just been able to receive ALL therapies in the home and therapist that had to travel >30 miles to see her get reimbursed! I just don't understand why it is set up this way.

By watching the therapists work with our child, I am more able to work with and understand our child. The therapy sessions were very educational to me - I learned how to play with our child and make it a positive learning experience.

I believe Parents as Teachers was crucial in the beginning before my son turned two in noticing delays. Early intervention (from age 2-3) with First Steps was so extraordinary in my sons development. Although he qualified for special services for his first year of preschool, he probably won't qualify for his fourth birthday. I owe that progress primarily to his speech/OT therapists during First Steps.

I just wanted to say that I know my son didn't receive First Steps until it was almost too late and our service coordinator was suppose to check in by phone once a month. I didn't hear anything from her until the Transition meeting three weeks before my son was to start ECSE.

Getting started was tricky. I believe we were trying to begin when there was a big change in the program in the way coordination was handled. Once we started, things went well.

Question #4: Only found out by Children's Mercy.

Question #7: Preschool

We have twin boys. Our one son used the services of First Steps twice. The first time for his gross motor skills he had a developmental delay. After receiving services for eight months he was caught up to his peer level. He re-entered the program at age two and a half for his speech/communication delays along with his brother. A process we started when they turned two in January, but did not receive any services until late August. The delay was very unnecessary. The intake person just did not return calls or seem to place any urgency on the matter. In fact, she only returned calls when I threatened to contact her supervisor. So, due to her inability to process our sons in a timely fashion our sons only received the speech/communication therapy for four and a half months before having to transition to SSD.

This was for only one child. We had two sons go through the program.

First Steps really helped my child. When we first started, she was so frustrated because she had speech delays and could not communicate well. Once she started with a speech therapist she made great improvements and was so much happier. Now she is in ECSE and loves going to school. She has become so much happier. I am glad we had this program to help us get the help for her. I think it has made a great improvement in her life and has helped her prepare for the future (i.e. school, social settings) by getting her the help she needed early.

The First Steps program helped my son greatly!! I have nothing but good things to say of this program. When my son first started he couldn't talk. All he could do was grunt and point to what he wanted. By the end of the program he was speaking! I've recommended to anyone who says their child needs help and everyone else I know with kids who have delays in development. You guys are the best at what you do!! Please keep up the good work!

First Steps was great. Our P.A.T. and First Steps coordinator were wonderful and my son got a good start on what was needed for him in the ECSE program. We saw results not so much right away in my child's speech but in the way he communicated with others and his confidence. I feel so grateful to the people who helped my son. I now see weekly results. Thank you!

My service coordinator and therapists were excellent. First Steps is a wonderful program and my daughter is proof. Thank you!

This is an awesome program! My child would not have made the progress she has without it. I have referred other families to the program. The service coordinator was very helpful.

If it had not been up to my husband and my MIL my four year old son would not be going to school. The school did not listen to our concerns and came in with an IEP (first one) written. They did not want to address our concerns as I have seen in another district where I taught for 11 years. They have their plan and seem to make all children fit "into it" rather than what works for the child. My other child's transition meeting is soon and she gets the "same" plan - but her levels are completely different so no individualization except insert name here.

We had difficulty locating a phone number (could a listing be added to phone book) at the start. Our service providers and service coordinator were terrific! The change in our child's abilities was profound and lasting as a result of all members of his team (OT, PT, Nutrition and service coordinator). Every interaction with these individuals was caring and professional. The purpose of paperwork mailed to our house was unclear. The monthly statements of services and billing appeared a poor use of resources given that we were not paying for these services. Also, the "measles-tested" paperwork and request for tax forms also seemed excessive given that we do not pay.

This experience has truly been a nightmare. Our therapist was inpatient and demeaning. We didn't feel we could allow our child to be subjected to her and her negativity. Our IEP called for two 30 minute sessions. On session three, she cut it down to one 15 minute session. She decided she would "consult" with us and we would teach him. She felt he was too distracted. Maybe she should have turned her cell phone off and kept people from coming in and out of the room talking. We have been horribly disappointed. They even had an IEP meeting regarding our son without notifying us. They tell us how severely delayed he is, but he doesn't qualify for summer services. We are more than happy to discuss our entire experience in greater detail. I have spoken with Dena Peterson regarding this also.

Without First Steps guidance I would not know where to turn for help. You all had done a remarkable job in helping my family to be as normal as possible. From my heart, I can't thank you enough.

Overwhelmed with so many people coming in my home. Services seemed to overlap. Could have been accomplished with less people in the home. Some therapists were excellent while others were poor.

We need more speech therapy, which the school district is unwilling to provide. The IEP was pretty much set before the meeting was held

Our child is not in a special needs group so, most of these questions do not apply. P A T referred our child because he did not hold or use scissors properly. Since we did not think of letting a two year old use scissors, it was our fault. Our child was in the program six months and our service provider missed or canceled about 50% of the appointments. She did a good job when she was here.

It took eight months to get my sons in-service for First Steps. I had to call the caseworker weekly just to find out what our next steps were. After four months of trying to reach my caseworker, I finally called her supervisor. Within a few days of talking with her supervisor I finally spoke with the caseworker, scheduled an interview, and had my son evaluated. It then took three months to begin services. The First Steps caseworkers are overburdened. There must be a more efficient way to evaluate children. It should not take eight months of persistence on the mother's part.

It's the best program out there!! Thanks for everything.

I just want to say how grateful I am for our service coordinator and speech therapist. We were extremely pleased. My child made wonderful progress. We are also thankful to First Steps for being available to us. We learned so much as a family. Thank you!

EXCELLENT JOB!!!

First Steps was very beneficial for our son. The services and support we received was outstanding.

Had him tested at age two years and he didn't qualify at that time. At two-and-a-half years he almost didn't qualify for speech. Had to really push. Then he only had one hour of speech a week with a BAD speech therapist. If he had had a better program earlier, he might be speaking better now. And now I feel he should have a more aggressive speech program. He has made progress but he'll be four years old in March. He needs a more one-on-one approach to help him with his speech.

Question #1: We were fortunate to know someone who knew about First Steps and could direct us to the right numbers we needed to call. Therefore we were able to get our services right away. If you don't know the right people it doesn't seem as if anyone has ever heard of First Steps.

Our coordinator was very knowledgeable and proactive. She did a great job and really helped our family! We are grateful for First Steps help. We went through early intervention in Texas with our deaf son, and it was not nearly as positive an experience.

Our service coordinator was our first contacts in this process. She was wonderful! Always very encouraging to me personally as a mom and so kind/compassionate toward my child. She is a wonderful asset to this organization.

Our three year old evaluation with First Steps resulted in our child not needing services. However, when he was tested at the school, they felt he needed Title I services. That was March or April of 2004. The plan was to start him in Title I at the beginning of this school year. He has currently been in Title I since August 23. He attends two days a week, 8:25-11:25. He is doing well at this time. We have not had an IEP yet.

The process time of paperwork to get the first evaluation was too long. I started the process when he was turning two and we did not get in and start therapy until he was two and a half! I feel it was too much paperwork or not enough personnel to make it a timely process.

As a provider and a parent with the First Steps program, I am extremely disappointed in the intake and eligibility process. My child was initially denied services by an intake coordinator without a speech evaluation being conducted. The intake coordinator said that since the doctor and P.A.T. had not documented a fifty percent delay that he was not eligible for services. Had I not been a provider and understood the eligibility process I probably would have thought my child was fine. When, in actuality, after being evaluated, he did have not only a fifty percent delay but also a hearing loss. How many kids have we missed due to situations like mine?

Our speech therapist was wonderful! My child made great improvements working with her and she worked our schedule so well. Thank you so much!

Once we finally got a speech therapist that had an open schedule my child was almost two years old. So, my child only got about seven months of services. There are not enough workers for the children - they don't have open schedules.

I don't know if we are currently receiving all of the services listed in the IEP because we just started on August 25, 2004.

First Steps was an incredible program that helped two of our children. Without First Steps we wouldn't have been able to afford the hearing aids that both our children needed. We are very grateful for First Steps. Tom Burnham and Noreen Conte were incredible! Wonderful support! Because of early intervention, my second son who also received services wasn't given an IEP. Kirkwood has denied all further help to us because he was doing so well. This was a very nice surprise but also very upsetting considering he has a genetic progressive hearing loss and will wear hearing aids for the rest of his life. Early intervention really worked here but now it is to the detriment of my son. I somehow feel that we almost would have been better in some ways to not intervene and then he would get the help that he will need in the future. I was told by Kirkwood that we would have to wait for my son to fail in order to receive any further services. Something about that just doesn't seem right especially after all the hard work that my son, the teachers, and our family have done!

I think they took my son out of the special education program and I think my son might still need some of these services. One thing that I can say he wants to learn. He still stutters when he talks. Can you please send me a list of head starts in my area for my three year old daughter. She's potty trained and she knows her ABC's already. Thanks

"See other form."

Note: No other form enclosed.

Our child is continuing to attend a private school for hearing impaired children. I do feel our district will be very helpful when the time comes.

Steps staff seemed lazy doing their part!

First Steps was very hard to get started in. There was little direction, few phone calls returned, etc. If it weren't for my parent educator helping, I suspect we would not have ever received help. However, the therapists were wonderful! After looking back, the hold-up seems to be the actual First Steps employee's! Too bad for families like mine...we almost gave up!

Outstanding Service!

#4 & #5: Our school district does not offer speech therapy at her daycare, therefore, I am unable to use the districts speech services!

I especially liked the freedom of choosing my own therapists. I did have to change therapists once. More flexibility in remaining in First Steps after the third birthday would be nice. My daughter turned three on March 17 and so had to go on to ECSE for the last two months and then minimal time in "summer school." Perhaps the kindergarten cut off could be used to send them to ECSE? I feel that she would have made more progress during the last six months had she been able to stay in First Steps. She has actually regressed in Gross Motor skills. If you would like to talk to me, please feel free to call.

#3: Because he was almost three when he started but there was a meeting and it did go very well.

#7: Head Start for other child without special needs.

I found the First Steps program to be very helpful. If it wasn't for First Steps my son would not have received good therapy.

First Steps has helped my family a lot. I wish there was a program to help the child from three to five to get the things they need.

I think First Steps was the best thing to happen to our family when we found out about our son had apraxia. I loved the home environment. I don't know what we would have done without it. Also, I think I had the best service coordinator and speech therapist. They helped me with everything I needed. So thank you to everyone in First Steps. You have been a blessing to our family. Thank you

Those who work with First Steps are extraordinary assets to the program. They were knowledgeable, affable and sincerely interested in our son's success. They were also creative and encouraging. Our son would not be communicating at the outstanding level he is without your help. The coordinating efforts and consideration were outstanding. They was always available and sincere in their concerns. Thank you.

The program is good if you know how to access all available resources. They are not always voluntarily offered. The parent, it seems most times, is the only advocate for the child. Currently, I am trying to disenroll my child because so much of the program is being cut that it is no longer of benefit to my child and his development.

My child does not receive as good a quality of therapies with the school system as she received through First Steps. The help she received through First Steps and Children's TLC was much more thorough with more hours of therapy.

I liked my service coordinator. She is so good with kids. She has patience with them. So I hope she stays on forever.

I felt that my family greatly benefited from this program and I would recommend it highly.

By the time I learned about First Steps our child was almost at the age where they exit First Steps. We only seen our case manager two times and the two ladies who tested him.

Our child now qualifies for Title 1 preschool in the fall. The wonderful therapists not only helped our child in all areas he needed, but also gave us the tools to work with him on a daily basis to give him the maximum progress. The program is a God send! He can go in school and never know that he had any delays. Everyone we worked with were wonderful! Keep up the GREAT work helping our kids with delays or disabilities.

Therapists were wonderful. Service coordinators needed more supervision. They were not timely in phone calls and scheduled visits. We went through three trying to find one that took part in the road toward helping our child. In our IEP meeting the coordinator came to the meeting in "saturday clothes". While this is not horrendous, it just represents a lack of motivation and importance of a child.

My daughter was discharged from First Steps after one year of therapy for physical and occupational delays as a result of prematurity. Program was great. Therapists were great. The coordinators were the problem. We went through three because of their lack of participation.

Our family has changed along with our beautiful son. For all your help and sincerity, we have a young child who is extremely smart and such a happy child. Without First Steps, I don't know where I would be. Thank you.

I feel the program helped my child progress greatly but because she "slipped through the cracks" in the beginning, I think she was delayed even further. And I feel she would have benefited even more had she been allowed to continue at the school. I feel she had no less of a delay than other children attending. Thank you.

Other than having a slow start, we had five weeks of compensatory services when our son turned three, everything else went smoothly. We were not part of the First Steps program for long, but continue with much support and guidance from St. Louis Regional Center.

The only problem I had with First Steps program was the speech therapist. The speech therapist didn't really help my son. Since he has been going to pre-school, he has improved in his talking. He is saying at least two words at a time. The Occupational Therapy teacher that he had was excellent. She knew his weaknesses and strengths. She helped him with his weaknesses.

Q5: Physical therapy is not being received at this time. It is in the IEP. However, that is okay with parents.

I believe Early Intervention of First Steps helped tremendously. Our daughter will turn four next month. Even with Down Syndrome, we have experienced very few delays and her speech is improving daily. Thank you to the First Steps and the therapists.

Q13: They all made an effort to learn all they could about it on their own and with information I provided them.

We are so grateful for all the help we've gotten through First Steps. Because of my son's high muscle tone, tactile defensiveness, and all his delays, he did (and still does) require physical, occupational and speech therapy. Because of all his therapy and doctor appointments, I was forced to quit working. Without First Steps, we would not have been able to afford the therapy he needed. I can't think of anything I would change about the program. All his therapists not only worked well with him one-on-one, but gave us a lot of good advice and things for us to do with him from day to day to help him. He's shown significant improvement in all areas, and we're very thankful!

We really like our Service Coordinator. She was so good with the kids and they liked her so well. I would have her again if I was having another child but I am not. So I will tell someone else to ask for her.

The service coordinator needs to be easily assessed. My child's coordinator could not be reached early. I sometimes called her and left messages at her office and cellular phone and she seldom called back or waited for a long time to respond. Once I had to call Jefferson City office to ask if she was still our coordinator because she did not respond to my calls at all. She said in February 04 that she would arrange the transition meeting in March but since March I could not reach her and our meeting ended up in May. Other than that, all the therapists were good and I would like to say thank you to them.

It was very difficult to get started with the First Steps program. There were many phone calls and it was difficult to get a response. Once we finally got in the program it has been wonderful. The results have been dramatic. Well worth the initial aggravation.

This was an extremely positive experience for our family and our child. Our daughter benefited from speech therapy and loved our teacher.

I don't know what I would have done without First Steps. I hope that there will continue to be funding for such a wonderful program.

My daughter no longer has special needs. She is a three year old who is healthy and fit.

Our service coordinator was a great help. Lots was accomplished. She even worked with us while she was away on family vacation.

I truly do not know what I would have done without First Steps. My son has progressed so well. In a lot of ways I feel like First Steps gave me my son by helping him be the person he is. I want to thank First Steps and the people we worked with. A very thankful parent.

1. We moved to Missouri from Washington when our child was one and a half years old. It was hard to connect into First Steps. After we were connected we had excellent experiences inside the program.
2. Our Service Coordinator was being promoted at the time of his transition, so the transition did not go well. I did not like my new Service Coordinator and did not call her for help.
3. My child did not have a communication system in place by the time he turned three. I wonder if he fell through the cracks on that issue?
4. Overall, I was very pleased with First Steps and was grateful that the services were available. We would not have been able to afford the services on our own, or know which services to have sought out.

Our child did qualify for Special Education Services. He was tested in the spring and continued speech therapy all summer. He tested out of his one IEP goal after two weeks. Thanks First Steps!

Our Service Coordinator was very helpful and easy to get in touch with. My child received services quickly. The whole process went very smoothly. Please let me know if there is any way I can help support the future of this program.

It is invaluable to families who have a child with a disability. Early intervention helped our whole family. Gov. Blunt needs to keep First Steps for all families to get an appropriate jump in life.

My child was first evaluated in October of 2003 at 25 months of age for speech and language delays. Her speech score was at a nine month level, but her comprehension was on target. Because of this, she was declined services. Six months later, the speech therapist called back to see if there had been any improvements. There had not. She turned in another evaluation and finally had it approved. By this time, my child was drastically behind peers her own age and for weekly services, it was too little too late. Since the transition, my child has been receiving services four days a week and has made remarkable progress in her speech and language development. She almost enjoys playing with peers her own age now too. I just think it's a shame that help had to be delayed at all.

The process of getting into the First Steps program was very lengthy and drawn out. We started before he was two (1 yr and 8 months) and didn't start to get services for another four to five months. So by then, we were even talking about transitioning at three when we had just started. The process to get on board needs to be faster so precious time isn't wasted. I loved our therapist and feel it was definitely worth it. This is a program worth fighting for! Keep First Steps!

Question 4: It was easy to learn about First Steps? NO. I found out about First Steps by a miracle of my God! My son was receiving speech therapy thirty-five minutes away for a thirty minute session (after everything was said and done, only 20 minutes) twice a week. I began looking for something closer, which led to four or five calls to places that said, "Well, try this number. They might know of therapy somewhere." What frustration. The rest of question four was so easy for us. I appreciated it. After being in First Steps only three weeks, we had his first breakthrough with speech. And, because our speech therapist had some knowledge in other areas, he was evaluated for physical therapy and now, one year later, our son's problems are more under control and he is very loving. Thank you for sending us this survey! What an awesome program.

They don't do a good job. Half the time my service coordinator or child's therapist didn't know how to handle her disabilities and she didn't respect confidentiality.

First Steps helped our family and our special child a great deal. We need more programs like this to help us with our ongoing needs. First Steps is great!

I love the fact that the therapists were able to come to our home to work with our child. It was very convenient especially because our child does not like to wait for appointments. Everyone we worked with was very professional and helpful. That took a lot of stress off of our family. Thank you

My child made good progress while in First Steps and I was allowed to help make choices for her. We have not been that successful with ECSE. I often wish this process was more like First Steps.

The First Steps Program was a wonderful program. Our son is doing so well, and we believe that we have to give most of the credit to the therapists that were given to us through the First Steps Program. We wouldn't of been able to afford all the services, even with Health Insurance. Our Health Insurance we have is through the state and as of right now, I think they only allow you to have six or eight visits. That would have given our son two weeks worth of therapy and if that would be the case, he wouldn't be doing as well as he is. He now attends the Special Learning Center thanks to our school district.

Shouldn't be shut down!!! Good resource for early intervention to prevent long term problems as in our case. Premie baby got help and today is a normal three year old.

A transition meeting is currently being scheduled. The initial process of getting evaluations and developing the IFSP was not completely clear. I was also unclear of the role of the service coordinator. I had minimal contact with the service coordinator and was unsure of the coordinator/parent role. Overall, I do not think my child would be where he is today without the services he received as part of the First Steps Program.

1. Biggest problem is Point of Entry. Not enough people were doing this efficiently.
2. Overall, we were very satisfied.

I feel First Steps helped us to get our loving child back. My son does not have severe disabilities. He has sensory Integration problems and fine motor delay. Our insurance would not have covered any treatment. My son's fine motor skills have caught up to age appropriate and we have all learned how to deal with and handle the sensory issues. We would have been lost without First Steps.

We are very appreciative of the services provided through First Steps. All individuals were knowledgeable and sensitive of our needs.

They have helped my child in talking more clearly and just talking all together.

Our son is apraxic and was diagnosed as such through our First Steps Speech Language Pathologist. If not for First Steps, we wouldn't have been knowledgeable enough to help our son. We were directed to an Apraxia Children's Network that also gave us information and led to a support group. Thank you First Steps! He continues to make wonderful progress through the ECSE program, but we believe that success is building on the success of First Steps. Please save First Steps for other families!!

Q4: Our PAT teacher told us about it.

Q6: It took a long time to receive services and we were not always getting called back.

After we had our child evaluated, the process took some time. The coordinator set up a meeting with us and the initial evaluation. I was never asked separately what I wanted for my child and when I was asked if I wanted this provider's services in front of that provider, I felt like I had to say yes. I think my child would have had better First Steps instruction at KECC, or at another child development center. I am skeptical somewhat of the individual providers. My child's therapy in First Steps was adequate, although compared to what he receives now there is no comparison. The coordinators efforts were minimal. I had few returned phone calls and I felt lucky to have anyone call me back at all. When I was offered services at the "set up" meeting with both the therapist and coordinator, I was just grateful to have any services. I felt something was better than nothing. The "coordinator bills" I was sent copies of, I had no idea what they were for. I think First Steps needs to do a lot of work to get out the "red tape" and rid high fee administration costs. It is time consuming and I'm not sure they are even working hard at all. The parents ought to choose whomever they want as a therapist instead of choosing names off a website list. I hope my comments have been helpful. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but I think some improvements could be made.

To put it mildly, I was appalled that Governor Blunt would consider putting First Steps on the chopping block. My first grader is now off of an IEP due to the extraordinary efforts of First Steps and her therapists. My son Nick will be four in April and has made tremendous strides as a direct result of First Steps. Both children have galactosemia, a disorder that causes language and speech delays, learning disabilities, fine motor and sensory problems. I believe both of them will grow up to be contributing, tax paying citizens and will more than repay any debt the state of Missouri might owe as a result of their disorder. This "first step" toward a better future not only helps my family, but all of Missouri. Thank you.

Q7: We were in until she turned three years old.

It's not the First Steps program that is the problem. They were great. It is the school system that we are having to deal with that is the major problem. Our service coordinator has been great in helping the family in all ways possible to deal with the horrible situations at the school.

It took quite some time for me to get services started for my foster son after he was placed here but once they finally started everything was great and he got regular services. The only real problem I had was getting physical therapy for my child and even after inquiring a couple of times we never received services even though there was a plan for services.

First Steps is a great program. Without them my child wouldn't be where she is today. First Steps provided us with a speech therapist. We could not afford this. I will be forever grateful for First Steps. They led me step by step through each phase. They made sure I understood everything. If I didn't understand they would explain everything to me again. Any problems that I had they fixed as soon as possible. Without this program my daughter wouldn't have been able to have help until she turned three. Early Intervention is the best way to help children with special needs. Thank you so very much for letting my daughter and I be a part of this program.

The First Steps program was the greatest gift to our family. We had been struggling so much, yet did not realize the magnitude of our son's delays and disabilities and how these were impeding his development. My only complaint with First Steps was that it took four months for us to get through the Intake process to begin receiving services. I do not want the Governor to take away or change this program at the expense of these children who so desperately need help. I will gladly accept a tax increase if it means giving these children the support they need. First Steps has been a life saver!

Our child barely did not qualify for any help after First Steps.

Because of the First Steps program, I am hoping with all the hard work we have gone through that this will mature our son. I am hoping he will not be labeled as ADD or ADHD. If I did not have First Steps and other programs, I truly feel I would still be struggling with him. This program was a wonderful gift that has helped our child in so many ways.

First Steps was the best thing that ever happened to my family. I watched my son go from barely functioning to above average. I wish so badly I would of known about this program for my first son. First Steps can be the life changing/improving difference. My kids really miss the therapists and the therapy.

It was such a blessing!

We loved the program and miss our speech teacher and developmental therapist.

First Steps is a wonderful program. They helped so much. I wish I could get involved to help just like they helped me.

First Steps is a wonderful program. I believe it helps many children reach developmental goals that without First Steps they may not have been able to achieve. I was slightly displeased with our service coordinator. My daughter's Speech Therapist coordinated most of the transition process to our local school district, not the Service Coordinator.

At six months of age his doctor recommended therapy. As I recall, we were originally referred to a special services program in Cape Girardeau for First Steps Services. It was a delay and they did nothing for five to six months. Then finally on one of my calls to them I was told they weren't going to be providing services at all. We were referred to a center in Rolla for First Steps services. We then got the help that our little one so badly needed. Prior to First Steps, he drug himself everywhere. He could not sit without assistance. He could not crawl or walk. He learned to sit and crawl at approximately eighteen months and walked at two years. It looks like our child will always have some disabilities. First Steps has made a big difference in his life.

First Steps was a godsend for my son. I am a divorced mother of two with very little support. That is until First Steps. My older son was diagnosed ADHD/BiPolar at the age of two and I had never heard of First Steps. It was not until my now three year old started having difficulties similar to his older brother that I became involved with the program. I cannot express the gratitude I feel toward the caseworkers and therapists that worked with my littlest son. I am sure without the early intervention and support that was given to me and my boys through First Steps my little guy would not be doing as wonderfully as he is today.

I have been obviously very happy with First Steps. It has helped my son so very much.

I am fortunate our family received services from First Steps. They helped me to get the ball rolling and guided me as to where and how to get my a diagnosis of Autism. The program got us involved with many other agencies such as Hannibal Regional Center, Columbia Children's Hospital/Genetics Clinic related services, Head Start, ECSE, Judevine Parents As Teachers. Marion County services played a very important role in helping my son and our family. We have a community of support that is invaluable to us and to many other families, as such I have also begun a letter writing campaign to Governor Blunt and other representatives so they will continue funding for this invaluable program and all other related agencies. Without the programs and funding for them to continue my family and thousands of others will be devastated because of the lack of services. Thank you!

We loved the program and it is a very special/helpful program.

Our son was born premature and was in intensive care for four weeks at the University of Missouri. They had no connection with First Steps and were not able to give any help with finding out about the program. Every hospital should be knowledgeable about the program and letting parents with special needs children aware of such programs. The program has been a tremendous benefit for my child and he received excellent services.

First Steps was a gift from God for our son. It made a difference in his life and future.

It was very difficult to get started in this program, and the therapists told us of all available therapy they felt was needed. I wish I could've found out about this sooner; earlier. Some of the therapists I feel take advantage of their billing hours. There was only one we felt truly billed for time on premises, not paperwork, etc. She is what truly honest people do to help out, do her job, for honest pay. Thank you.

Q #12: In the beginning we discussed OT applicable to my son. We initiated with an OT who was gone for a wedding (her own) and honestly I don't remember what happened after that but nothing happened. My son was progressing fine so I did not pursue it but I'm not sure our SC did either. Service Coordinator: Our SC was nice and attended our first meeting but we had no interaction after that other than one call she made to check in. If I needed more I would've pursued her but I think I expected more initiation and content of value from a SC. Thanks so much for offering this service. My son is now fully up to speed in terms of his development. Our PT was very helpful and took personal interest in my child and our family.

We felt lost before utilizing the First Steps program. My son has improved greatly over the past year and a half. Everyone was so helpful and we loved our speech therapist. Thank you for all your help.

I feel that the therapies my child received while in First Steps helped her and made her more prepared for services thru the school which are provided in our home due to compromised immune system. The First Steps coordinator did not do a good job with helping us or the transition period. I was the one that kept after the school district to get the services started again. Which I understand she should not have gone without if everything was handled correctly. I have heard on TV that they may do without First Steps in our area because of budget cuts. We did not get medicaid and could not afford these therapies without First Steps. I can't imagine how far behind she would be at age three if she didn't receive these services. Also the therapist at the school are too busy with so many kids that they don't have the time to see the children more than once a week and there's no way to reschedule if school is out or the therapist or child is sick.

Our service coordinator was wonderful. This First Steps program has been a god send and our son has made significant improvement thanks to First Steps.

Our speech therapist did a wonderful job helping our son with speech development. Her observations led our son to occupational therapy for sensory integration therapy. This program really turned our son into a more "normal" child. He participates in programs at the area early childhood center and was able to be toilet trained at age three. Our family has greatly benefitted from First Steps.

I think that our therapy could have been more effective. My son is now enrolled in the school district's speech therapy program and I have learned more in two sessions with his current therapist than I did in a year with our First Steps therapists. I think therapy should focus on the child and the family! More emphasis could be placed on training the parents to help their child. Thus, more progress would be made in the long run. Thank you!

First Steps is a wonderful program and has provided our son with exceptional services to assist in improving his speech and language. We couldn't be more pleased with the services he has received.

The first steps program was very effective in helping our son communicate. There was great improvement in the five months we were able to use First Steps.

In the beginning we had a hard time getting our son enrolled with First Steps. Our first service coordinator was not very knowledgeable regarding what would and would not be covered. We then requested an independent service coordinator who helped us. I feel like you should have service coordinators experienced with each individual's special needs.

Finding out about First Steps and working with the intake coordinator was very difficult. But our service coordinator and providers were wonderful. It made a huge impact on my daughter.

The first step program is wonderful and has helped us work and learn about our child with disabilities. Since leaving First Steps, we have been extremely disappointed. The special education program through the schools has been a let down for us. When we had concerns we were not listened to and the therapists we have are not qualified for a child with multiple disabilities. They didn't even have equipment in the classroom for our child. Nothing to position him in or any cause and effect toys (since he is blind). We voiced our concerns to one of the coordinators, she didn't listen or help in any way. This is so frustrating because we had a wonderful experience with First Steps. First Steps was the best thing that happened to our family. We learned a lot of skills to help our child and help us voice our opinion concerning his rights.

Without First Steps our son would not be where he is today. We owe everything to First Steps. Governor Blunt, please continue funding First Steps.

I would like to say that I don't know where I would be right now if First Steps was not around. They are the ones that have helped me and my family. My son is so much better off today because of First Steps.

First Steps was a wonderful program for our child who did beautifully with her therapies and improved by leaps and bounds. We are most thankful for the services you provide and hope Governor Blunt is unsuccessful in trying to end the program. That would be most grievous if there was no First Steps Program.

Please continue First Steps. It greatly helped our child with his speech needs and he is now doing to well with his speech/language skills. Early intervention was key to his success.

If it was not for the First Steps program we would not have been able to afford all the services that my child received and private insurance does not cover even DAFO's and hardly any PT or OT time but yet we make too much to qualify for anything else. My child is doing wonderful and I thank the First Steps program for helping keep up the great job. Our coordinator was excellent and always willing to answer questions or help any way she could. Thank you.

He's going to start head start and Pre-K pretty soon. Thank you.

We are currently paying everything out of pocket because the ECSE here in Ozark would not work with us. We filed a state complaint and the school was found in compliance. We are currently in the process of moving to Nixa, MO in order to give our son the education he needs to teach him with Autism. First Steps was invaluable to us and our child's progress. Insurance doesn't cover anything related to Autism and we were able to make tremendous progress with our son in a little over a year. We are currently private paying our First Steps providers because of their wonderful ability with our son. First Steps was absolutely invaluable and should not be cut!

Way too much paperwork processed!

First Steps was a blessing for our child as he lagged in development due to a visual impairment. The only issue we initially had was a slow response from an intake coordinator. The loss of the First Steps program would be tragic. Improvement and enhancement would be great for families like ours. Anything else would send a political message that our state legislators and government do not understand the savings and results that early intervention adds up too.

We had a wonderful First Steps experience and I can't imagine where my child would be developmentally now without the help we received. I hope this program is ALWAYS in existence for families that have special needs.

First Steps was a critical part of our child's development. We are truly grateful for this program and wouldn't be where we are today if it weren't for early intervention. I know I am only one voice but we will advocate for keeping First Steps in the State's budget. We received therapy OT, PT and Speech, adaptive equipment (stroller and stander) and many other items - (bathchair, ball & switches which have given our son more confidence and independence in every day activities as well as make it easier for mobility for us. First Steps must be kept important for it affects Missouri's future! These kids deserve every opportunity to make a difference in everyone's lives!

Our child received physical therapy and it was well-coordinated, well-executed and very beneficial.

Thank you. My son is eating normally and behaves in all environments better than other children and I tell their parents about how you helped my son.

My son received speech services for six months. He was essentially non-verbal and within six months he was at or above average. I am a speech therapist and was not able to achieve much progress with my son as he thought of me as "mom" not "teacher". Although it took two evaluations to get services - It was the best thing that could have happened to him. The therapists and coordinators were exceptionally caring and professional. I would hate to think of what his communication skills would be like without this intervention. This is a very important service. Our entire family has benefited.

Without First Steps we would not have been able to afford all the therapy that our son needed. We were pleased with all our therapists and our service coordinator.

This is such a great program. I know there is talk of discontinuing funding for this program and that would be truly tragic! They helped us so much and although we no longer need their help, I personally know many who do. I know I would have been hard pressed to pay two private specialists to give the help we received. Thank you to all who contribute!!

I'm grateful for the services provided to our family for First Steps. Thanks.

First Steps is a wonderful program! This is my second child to receive services. We could not have done it without First Steps. Thank you.

Excellent program that helped our child. Our son NOT need to receive any services after his experience with First Steps.

We had an excellent coordinator who had a vast knowledge in our child's specific disability. I will always be thankful to the person who introduced me to the program and who worked so quickly to get me the help I needed. We had just moved to this state and it was a very stressful time for our family.

This is an important program and we were very grateful for the help to our daughter and our family!

Question 1: Once I convinced them my child needed to be evaluated it was easy, but I had to fight to get there.

Question 16: If not for First Steps I don't think my son would be in therapy now.

First Steps gave our son confidence and started him on the road to a normal childhood. Without it, I don't think we would have caught his problems yet and they would be even harder to overcome later. First Steps helped him begin to speak, jump and learn to play like other kids.

This organization is awesome. The therapists are great! I know our child and our family would not be at the level we are at now if we didn't go through First Steps. I thank God, the government and the community, for providing us with such special hard working, knowledgeable, caring people as our coordinator and therapists. My husband and I felt comfortable throughout the program and learned so much. We were very comfortable with the transition to the next level of services. Please don't do away with these services.

We are grateful for the First Steps program and the treatment, therapy and medical devices and technology it has helped to provide. We may have seen so many lost months perhaps years in getting our child the services he needed immediately. Every child with a disability should have this same opportunity. It is a NECESSITY OF LIFE! Thank you.

First Steps was literally a "life saver" for our little boy and our family. The issues, disorders, and diseases our son has such as autism and epilepsy are not gone, but thanks to the early and intense intervention of much needed therapies through First Steps (and Missouri straight Medicaid) our little boy is not gone either. We are so thankful that our child got the specialized, early and intensive intervention he needs. My husband works at Children's Mercy and has a good job and insurance. My son's grandmas is a CMH social worker. I am an informed and passionate advocate for my son. We have a loving network of church members, family and friends to help us and our children. Even with all of those blessings our boy would NEVER have made it to where he is without the programs Missouri has to care for, assist and educate disabled children. Missouri First Steps is a VITAL step in helping our children become all they were meant to be! P.S. We voted for Gov. Holden and are faithful that he and his policies will continue to protect, teach and provide for our special needs children in this great state. NO child left behind-NOT ONE! Thank you and God bless.

I am a mother of two autistic children in which only my youngest participated in First Steps. I didn't even know about First Steps until the nurse practitioner at our pediatricians office (who I rarely saw) told me about it. Even though I have been a member of Parents as Teachers since my oldest child was around 18 months, she never told me about First Steps or the fact that she saw some red flags with my son. My experience with First Steps was wonderful. My son received speech and occupational therapy from a mother and daughter team. From the start she was very respectful and honest with me about my son's condition. She was not hard or cold about it and very supportive. My son made a lot of progress. Both women did their job well, and worked with him from the heart. They wanted him to improve and came to care for him as much as he cared for them. I will always be thankful to them for what they have done with my son. I feel that the First Steps program is priceless to families and their special children. My only regret is that my oldest son was not in the program and I often wonder how much farther he would be today if he had been in the program. As you may know with autism early intervention is so important. So I pray that the First Steps program will not be taken away from families in Missouri. Also, every physician in Missouri should know about First Steps so more families in need can benefit from this program. From a blessed mother to two autistic boys.

First Steps was vital in bringing our family together to discover we could raise a child with special needs. Without their help I would have been lost and scared. Our child is a happy three year old due to the assistance of First Steps.

If it wasn't for the First Steps Program I would have not known that there was help out there for families with a disabled child. We stuck together because of First Steps. My family felt comfortable with these programs. They make you feel like we are all family and are there for one another. We all need these programs like First Steps. My child believes in First Steps and so does the family.

I had no problem with the First Steps Program in general. I think this is a very useful and necessary program. I did not agree with how my child's speech/language skills were tested when he was two years old. I thought that my area coordinator (the coordinator that got the First Steps process started) was an excellent source of information. My service coordinator, however never returned phone calls promptly and sounded immature while giving information.

It was not for the First Steps program I would have had to take out a loan to get my daughter's hearing aides. My insurance company would not pay anything for her hearing aids. They said it was an exclusion from our plan. My county doesn't have a special program to meet the needs of a hearing impaired child. My daughter goes to a deaf school. She is making great progress. She was also able to utilize the early intervention program.

The First Steps Program was very beneficial to my family. The only complaint I have is that our county had a difficult time keeping Speech Therapists, so my son went nine months without speech therapy.

I hope First Steps continues in Missouri. I can't imagine going through the first few years of my child's life and the challenges we faced without the assistance of First Steps. Families need this program. Thank you so much for this program and all the good that it does.

I am pleased with the First Steps program. I was told from First Steps that the school district would continue my child's therapy but the school district did not. The school district said my child was too smart for ECSE. My child is needing therapy in his gross and motor skills and occupation. I think First Steps program needs to be kept.

The program was vital to our son's progress. He progressed to the point of not qualifying for school-age services.

I feel that Governor Blunt needs to stop messing with the First Steps program. It really helped my child and me. I'm a single mother of a son with developmental delays, and if it wasn't for the First Steps program, I'd be totally lost. It also helped my son to get used to school surroundings, before he started Pre K-Preschool. My son loves school and when school isn't in session for some reason, he gets really upset. But I use the techniques that First Steps showed me and we have fun like we're in school. I've recommended the First Steps program to a lot of parent's I've met.

Thanks to First Steps my child is learning speech. If it wasn't for First Steps my child would not be where he is today on his language skills. Thank you to Parents as Teachers for letting me know about First Steps.

I have two children with special needs and one attended the First Steps program. Both attended Early Childhood Special Education Services (one is attending it right now). If it wasn't for these services I don't know where we would be right now. Both First Steps and ECSEs have bought out so much in both of my children that I am amazed with the progress they make everyday! If it wasn't for these services available I would be afraid for me and my children. God bless these service and the providers for their services!!!!!!

I have been very pleased with the services my son has received through the First Steps program. I was amazed at how they let you know exactly what was going on with the case and how they really paid attention to your concerns.

I listed six and seven for ECC. You people need to have a talk with the principal Cindy Langensand because I do not agree with her action when it comes to my child's care. You DON'T put your hands on my child and try to rip her out of her mother's hand and told to let go wouldn't so I made her. Don't know the lady's name but I don't appreciate the comments that were made and then be threatened by L.S.M.O. P.D. for looking out for my child. You WILL respect what I say there will be no spanking or jerking on my children because if it ever happened again, I will take legal actions against the school and that person. I will not have my girls treated bad or abused by anyone. Basically, what I am saying is there will be no corporal punishment accepted at all. That is very illegal and I will punish anyone that does anything to my girls like smacking them or jerking on their arms, paddling, etc. This will not be acceptable.

Our child received Physical Therapy and Speech during her time with First Steps. Without the First Steps program our daughter would not have gotten as far as she has, nor would she be eligible for the special education program she is currently enrolled. We can only hope that the First Steps program will be around to benefit other families, the way that it has benefited ours.

I do not feel that our service coordinator provided much help. She would rarely contact me. However, I was very happy with the intake coordinator and the therapists that my son saw. Overall, I was very pleased with my First Steps experience.

The state should look into other ways to fund for education. EDUCATION is one of the important steps in a child's life. Without education, you have nothing!! The state should not cut the funds or budget for First Steps. The state needs to look into other ways to fund the Parents As Teachers program after the age of 3 to 5. Signed, A concerned parent of a child in ECSE and in elementary education.

We had a TERRIBLE time with service coordination until the last few months. Only one service coordinator seemed willing to do anything to help. The others didn't call, visit or respond to calls that I made to them.

Both of my children received services from First Steps and are doing well. They would both be considerably behind had they not received these services.

The First Steps Program, counselors, speech therapists, and service coordinators have all been a huge help for my family's well being and for my son's ability to overcome his speech delay. I'm very grateful for all of the time and help we received, especially my son's speech therapist. She understood his needs, addressed them and helped him learn how to communicate with friend and family.

We had to remove my grandson shortly after he was introduced to it because the doctors wanted to get him stabilized after putting him on the ketogenic diet in October 2003, shortly after he began seeing therapists. When they first started coming for therapy he was experiencing a lot of seizures of all kinds so it was difficult to do anything but just hold him and comfort him through the seizure episodes which were very frequent, usually just minutes apart. In my opinion it is a very good program.

I think that anyone who works with First Steps should have children of their own. That way they will know just what people go through all the time. No one should ever say they know what people go through if they do not have kids. If you don't have kids then how would they know.

It is an excellent program. I have had four of my children involved in it. Just a great program!

First Steps 0-3 Program is INVALUABLE! We moved to St. Louis specifically to participate in Missouri's highly reputable First Steps Program. We were assigned an incredibly knowledgeable service coordinator, who was and is always timely and professional as well as genuine and understanding. Though there seemed to be a great deal of paperwork, rules and regulations and other formalities, service commenced promptly. We were connected with outstanding service providers who remain friends, supporters and resources. Governor Matt Blunt is ludicrous to even suggest disposing of this program as doing so would be a significant detriment to the many, many children with disabilities (and their families) that will follow in the years to come.

Q5: Not enough therapists...cancelled special services co-op windsor

It has been a while since we received "First Steps" services. I really have mixed feelings as it has really helped Timothy's speech problems. I tried the special co-op Windsor and they really made receiving services DIFFICULT! They only had one therapist available to us and she was very hard to schedule because she was "booked up". I had to cancel and use ONLY the HEADSTART program which I think has helped my son TREMENDOUSLY! Thank you.

The First Steps Program was instrumental in the development of our son. At age two and a half, our son was diagnosed with Fragile X Syndrome which is the most common inherited cause of mental impairment. There is no cure and the only treatment is early intervention. Fortunately for us, we were already enrolled in First Steps and have been told by various different professionals that his good progress to date was in large part due to the First Steps program. We are so grateful for this program as it is so important at this young age. The only negative experience we've had was when we transitioned to ECSE, the amount of therapy decreased and went from private therapy to group therapy. We feel our son could be getting more benefit from therapy and or private therapy as we had with First Steps. Thank you.

I thought the first steps program was wonderful. But there were a few areas needing improvement. My service coordinator never returned my calls and eventually dropped our case without letting me know. I found out through someone else. And the speech therapist cancelled more than she came. Nevertheless, my son showed great improvement.

This program is quick to say a child has a need and that is not true. First of all children are not going to do their best for someone they don't know. Some will not talk or play for people they don't know. This program locks children in because they don't respond to them. This program looks for development by age. To me this is not good. Different children come around at different ages. So to me this program looks to make a child look undeveloped.

Not aware of First Steps until a friend referred us. The program was great for my son. The transition into ECSE was wonderful for him. His issues (speech and language) has increased tremendously, which makes us happy. His frustration level has decreased to almost nothing. Without the in-home therapy our son would not be where he is today!!! Thank you!

First Steps had such a wonderful impact on our family. I would hate to see an end to it. I think the people are overworked and understaffed.

To the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

I am a parent of a child with Down Syndrome. In response to the recent consideration of cutting a very important program; the First Steps program started with my son at the early age of three months, and continued until he was three years old. While coming out to our home, they taught us many things. Our son had four different types of therapy which included physical therapy, which taught him how to crawl, sit-up, and eventually walk; occupational therapy, which taught him to use hand and eye coordination such as building blocks, and snapping together objects; developmental therapy (which is not normally covered by insurance) which taught him to be more patient, and to do many early childhood abilities. And speech therapy, the most important to us. In addition, our son has many other issues. He has low muscle tone that creates a big problem when he eats his food or drinks from his bottle. The therapist taught us how to teach him to do all of these important things. We would not have known what to do if they hadn't taught us how to do this. Through the last three and half years I have grown as my son has grown! We have learned together, and I have been able to teach him what I have learned through therapy. I would not have known what to do if we didn't have the First Steps program as a guide through the most crucial years of my son's life. You never know what to expect whenever you have a child, but you know they are a gift. I want to thank God for my very special gift, and I want to thank First Steps for helping my husband and I go through what we have been through with our child. He is now in preschool. He is doing very well and is keeping up with his peers for the time being. I know that if we hadn't had the First Steps Program he would not be where he is today.

I don't speak english well. So I need to understand in Spanish.

Parents As Teachers needs to let parents know about First Steps as soon as they see a sign of delay. She did not let us know until almost three years of age.

I feel that without First Steps help and therapy, my son would still not be able to communicate with us and he would be very frustrated. I am very grateful for all the program has done for my family. Thank you.

First Steps has been wonderful for both of my children.

I am so very thankful for the First Steps program. This was my third child to go through it. All three of my boys benefitted greatly from First Steps and ECSE. The two oldest are in school now and no longer require services. It was great to have an involved Service Coordinator who helped us through each step. The therapists we used were all very knowledgeable, friendly and extremely helpful, especially in giving us suggestions of things we could do to help our children in between sessions. I think First Steps is a wonderful program. I don't know what we would have done without it.

I believe the First Steps program is essential in giving our young children the head start they need before they are eligible for services through the school districts. I believe the program helped my child be a more active participant in social settings and at home. I hope that First Steps continues to provide these necessary benefits to Missouri's children.

It was the absolute best thing ever that could have happened to our son.

If it wasn't for the Missouri First Steps program and receiving a jump start on our son's speech problem, we would still be unable to understand him. They catered to our son's needs and made a huge improvement with him. Since starting First Steps and then going through ECSE our son has went from only being able to say five words that we were able to understand to what he is able to speak today. Being able to carry on more conversations and even telling US stories is wonderful. This is just a big heartfelt thank you in the improvement in one child and family that you have helped. This program was and still is a life saver for several families. Once again, thank you for giving our little son a chance to be able to communicate. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

It is an excellent program that will help better the chance of young children to become productive adults in the state of Missouri.

First Steps was crucial to our three year old learning to talk (he has apraxia). At two and a half he could not talk at all and now at three and a half he is almost appropriate for his age. Our daughter (a year and a half old) has the same speech concerns. With the continued help of First Steps, we are confident she will have the same success as our son. Our hope is our son will no longer need speech by kindergarten. Our daughter, if First Steps is continued, may even be phased out by three or four. This program is so very important to our children's social and emotional well being. Not being able to communicate hinders any possibility of friendship or self-confidence.

The therapists felt like our son was up to his age level in development, so they quit before his third birthday. We feel his development has been quite normal lately, and don't feel we need extra community services that are available.

I love the First Steps program. Before First Steps we were not able to communicate with our son. Toward the end of our First Steps program, we had a therapist to come to our home two nights a week. She was great with our son. After each session she gave us an update on his progression. She also gave us information on things to practice with him at home. My son did not use IFSP because of the county we live in and the school Jeron attends. My son is doing so well that he was screened last week and scored above his age range. It all started with First Steps. Thanks from a grateful mom.

It's a great help to know that First Steps and PAT are there to help one way or another. Thanks for the help of my child.

I must share that the speech, developmental and occupational therapists changed our lives in First Steps. These three ladies helped my son immensely with his diagnosis of PDD. Without First Steps I don't know where my son and our family would be today. Because of First Steps my son and I were able to attend the three week Parent Training Program and my husband and I came out feeling so powerful and full of knowledge. I now do sessions at home with my son every day. I thank God for the First Steps program everyday. Thank you for your time.

We hope that the Governor does not cancel First Steps, as do many other parents.

Overall, I was very pleased with our experience with First Steps. My child stopped First Steps in September (Physical Therapy). In August we had a speech evaluation. She was behind but did not qualify for services. Now at twenty six months she is testing at eighteen months and she still doesn't qualify. This is frustrating since other states require only a 25% delay. I feel a 50% delay for qualification is a disjustice to a child.

The First Steps changed our lives and my son's life. He would not have gotten the comprehensive services had it not been for this program. Thank you so much.

First Steps is vital to the success, growth and development of children birth to three years. Our family, especially my son, has made progress with help and early intervention. Without a program such as First Steps our youth would be deprived of so many developmental milestones.

First Steps has done a great job with helping my daughter. She has developed in areas that I thought would take her a long time to get her where she needed to be. I really do appreciate all the help and needs the First Steps program has helped us with. All the staff has done a great job with working with us. I really do appreciate it.

First Steps is a great program that served as an informational stepping stone for our family. After completing the qualifying process and reviewing a potential IEP for our child, we decided to go a different route by utilizing a one-on-one speech therapy treatment through a private organization. Socialization skills with peers is achieved through our local preschool. Thank you for all the time and we feel our child has excelled with our chosen path.

I hope, in the future, the Service Coordinators are monitored more carefully. We were in the program for nearly two years and my service coordinator did NOT contact me ONCE. I found out towards the end of our program time, that she was indeed, supposed to play a role in this process and she was being PAID for it. This angered me that she took advantage of my son and our family, and it was a disappointment towards the program itself. I was very confused throughout the whole program and did not have any way to obtain information.

Q5: Explained in a way that teachers or others with experience in the area understood.

Q6: My Service coordinator did NOT do her job AT ALL as a result, I was shifted from one to another at the very end of the program.

Q7: I received information and very brief explanations.

Q9: She never returned calls.

Q10: She never returned calls.

Q11: Going through the program was a learning process, I was unlucky because I had a lousy Service Coordinator who was not there for us to help us through this.

Q16: Off the charts agree with this statement!

Midsection/Pg 3 Q1: This was an area I was VERY confused with. As I said before, our Service Coordinator really let us down. I hope this position will be monitored more closely in the future to prevent another event like I had.

First Steps is a great program that served as an informational stepping stone for our family. After completing the qualifying process and reviewing a potential IEP for our child, we decided to go a different route by utilizing a one-on-one speech therapy treatment through a private organization. Socialization skills with peers is achieved through our local preschool. Thank you for all the time and we feel our child has excelled with our chosen path.

When my daughter started her speech therapy with First Steps, she said, "uh" for everything. We had a speech therapist work with her twice a week. When she exited, she was using the correct sounds for words and knew some basic sign language. This program made a huge difference for us. We never could have afforded to have a speech therapist in our home without it. Plus the added advantage of having someone available when we were available.

The First Steps program is great. It would create a disservice and a disadvantage to many young children with disabilities if eliminated.

Without the Early Intervention provided to my son through the First Steps Program, doctors and therapists, as well as ourselves, realize he would not have recovered so much brain function. With my son's type of brain injury (skull fracture and bleed resulting in oxygen deprivation) we have been told early intervention was the only way to recover most brain function. He is walking, talking and even reading a little because of this early intervention. **SAVE FIRST STEPS!! PLEASE!**

Awesome program. I don't know what we would have done without it.

We are currently getting speech and hearing services through the MOOG Center for Deaf Education. PT and OT services are being provided by the early childhood program in our local school district.

Don't know what we would do, or had done without First Steps. Wonderful program.

My son's Speech/Language Pathologist was instrumental in helping him to be able to speak with us (his parents) and others in a meaningful way. I firmly believe that without the interventions received through the First Steps program, my son would have been three years of age and still unable to express himself and interact with others verbally. The positive impact of the program on my son's life is ultimately immeasurable but also undeniable.

Early intervention programs like First Steps are vital in assisting children with special needs to reach their full potential. Without the help of First Steps, I don't believe our son would be thriving and reaching his development milestones. At the age of two our son was basically non-verbal. Now at the age of three and six months, he is fully communicating and catching up with his peers in language and other areas of development.

First Steps has made a HUGE difference in our son's life. He has a very unique diagnoses and First Steps was very helpful in addressing his needs and plan for his continued development.

While it took three plus months from the time we filled out paperwork until a service coordinator contacted us, when we did start therapy it was wonderful. We were able to find a way to reach my child and teach her to speak by breaking down each word and giving her verbal cues on how to move her mouth/tongue. She still has a lot of difficulty with this but without the training from our therapists Maddie would be a much different child. Before she was only saying "dada" and now she has about 80 plus words in her vocabulary. She was diagnosed with PDD but the training we received was invaluable. I truly hope this program continues for families like ours who desperately needed help!

This is a great program and is vital to my child's development! Thank you everyone.

My foster son came into care at almost two years old with 50% developmental delays across the board. First Steps was a much needed and appreciated resource in helping to deal with his many special needs. Therapists were able to help give me strategies for managing his SI disorder and loan equipment so I could follow through with therapies on a daily basis. With the help of First Steps therapists he has made remarkable progress. It would have devastating consequences if it were cut from the state budget. **SHAME ON OUR GOVERNOR!!!**

The special education service, First Steps has really been a big help to our family by showing other ways to communicate.

I think it is a great program. It helped our girls get the help they needed but couldn't afford.

The First Steps program helped us with our son and his speech problems. We were very impressed with how organized and knowledgeable the women were that we worked with. They were truly appreciated. I was, however, very disappointed after the transition out of First Steps into the care of Cole County R-II at Blair Oaks. Even though Devin's speech was definitely helped and was no longer qualified for help through the school system, the schools communication with us was not there. Our caseworker and I had to make a lot of unnecessary phone calls to finally figure out that we were no longer qualified. Their communication with our speech therapist was not good either.

My son was not able to do anything a full term child could do and the people at CP Center helped us significantly. I appreciate everything you guys do. Thanks.

First Steps was a great move for us. Our daughter's only problem is her speech. She did have problems with new people in transition, but is much better with this. She does receive speech therapy in Kentucky through Head Start and is doing very well.

I believe that the area that our family had the most trouble with was getting ahold of our service coordinator. I do thank God though for First Steps and the services that they provided for my daughter, that otherwise we could not afford!

I am really glad that Jesse was able to receive the help from First Steps. I know for a fact that if my son had not received this help he would not be as far as he is today. There was nothing I could have done on my own.

First Steps is an excellent program. I don't know what we would have done without it. I hope our government officials (Matt Blunt) can show us how important our children are to them by keeping First Steps available to all. Everyone I met at First Steps was extremely well educated and helpful.

I am very grateful for the First Steps program. Jalen has a speech and fine motor delay. Without this program I am unsure of how he would have progressed. Jalen had speech therapy and fine motor skills therapy every week. We were able to communicate with Jalen a lot better through this therapy and his tantrums became controllable. I was finally able to communicate with my child. This has also helped Jalen to transition into other programs. He is currently enrolled and attending Head Start in Savannah where he continues seeing a speech therapist. First Steps gave me the tools I needed to be a better parent and I would hate to see that taken away from the children that really need it.

First Steps is a very good program that needs to stay in progress. For a program that we initially not aware of, it has helped me and my family. I give high praise to the First Steps Program. Keep the program going.

My husband and I are very pleased that such a wonderful program as "First Steps" exists. We've talked with others that agree. How could anyone not support such a dedicated program for children. Anyone with any LIFE EXPERIENCE knows how special children are and how important it is to do whatever is necessary to aide in their growth and development.

First Steps was the conduit we needed to get to where we are now. Had it not been for the therapy my son received last summer we would not be as advanced as we are today. Our speech therapist "unlocked the vault" that my son was living in and helped him learn how to think about appropriate speech, talking and motor-neuron connections.

Our therapist was very helpful with me and my son even though we didn't have very much time with her. I wished that there would have been better information out to the public about the First Steps program! I would have had my son in A LOT sooner than I did!!

Without the help of First Steps, we don't know where our child would be. This program gave him the intervention he needed. Our speech provider and service coordinator were not always easy to reach or were not always helpful, but our developmental and occupational therapists were wonderful. Overall, this program was extremely beneficial to my son. Our child has an Autism disorder. He now talks and participates in social activities. First Steps is an invaluable program to our family.

The Service Coordinator provided little or no help. She rarely attended the meetings; provided no information or help with my son's transition out of First Steps. She was very difficult to contact and usually a myriad of personal crisis' prevented her from helping our child or family. Our physical therapist and Occupational Therapist are outstanding professional caregivers who truly helped our child and our family. A number of early intervention providers helped us in so many ways, we are most grateful.

I did not know about First Steps until my P.A.T. told me about it.

First Steps came into our life and helped us immensely when we found out our daughter had a hearing impairment. We were devastated but the resources offered alleviated many worries. The people (service coordinator, etc.) were great!!

Our experience with First Steps was a good one with the therapists that we had. Our service coordinator was extremely incompetent but because of that I am now a service coordinator for First Steps and feel that I do a very good job because I know how I would not want to be treated because of our experience.